



IDENTIFYING AGREEMENT AND BARRIERS TO PROPOSED CANINE INFECTIOUS DISEASE GUIDELINES FOR DOG GROUP SETTINGS



Jason W. Stull¹, Michelle Evason², Jennifer I. Kasten¹

¹The Ohio State University, College of Veterinary Medicine ²Michelle Evason Veterinary Internal Medicine & Nutrition Consulting, Rayne Clinical Nutrition Canada

INTRODUCTION

Dog shows, dog parks, athletic competitions, and other events and activities where groups of dogs temporarily congregate, afford tremendous opportunities for positive social interaction. These group events also create high-risk environments for the transmission of canine infectious disease. Guidelines for disease risk awareness and reduction in these settings are limited.

Creation of Evidence-based Guidelines for Canine Group Events

In 2014-2015, a panel of canine infectious disease experts* researched and drafted 44 evidence-based guidelines to inform and reduce the risk of infectious disease transmission for dogs in group settings.

A core group of constituents directly involved with a variety of canine group settings were then surveyed on the feasibility, suitability and practicality of the draft guidelines.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In August 2015 a survey of attendees at the National Parent Club Canine Health Conference was completed to determine agreement with and perceived barriers to implementation of the developed recommendations. A presentation on canine infectious disease risks preceded the survey (open for 2 weeks).

- 15-minute self-administered survey provided to 270 Conference attendees.
- Likert-type and open-ended questions (online and paper formats available) to seek feedback on 21 recommendations.
- Responses summarized by agreement and perceived ability to implement. Open-ended comments grouped into themes.

*Expert panel: JW Stull, M Evason, MJ Burkhard, R Sherding, J O'Quin, A Hoet, JS Weese

RESULTS

The survey was completed by 185 individuals (69% response). Respondents self-identified as participants, judges, and/or breeders with involvement in a variety of group settings:

- Dog shows (95%)
- Training classes (80%)
- Athletic events (53%)
- Boarding (29%)
- Dog parks (17%)
- Dog day care (11%)
- Other (16%)

Agreement and Ability to Implement Recommendations:

Mean agreement across recommendations was 59% (range 34-87%); Figure 1. Recommendations with less than 50% agreement (n=7) focused on monitoring/verifying dog health status, recent international travel, and involvement of a veterinarian with the setting.

Mean difficulty to implement recommendations was 47% (range 19-75%); Figure 2. Recommendations with greater than 50% perceived difficulty to implement (n=10) focused on those requiring oversight, and the same themes as low agreement (above).

Figure 1: Agreement with Recommendation

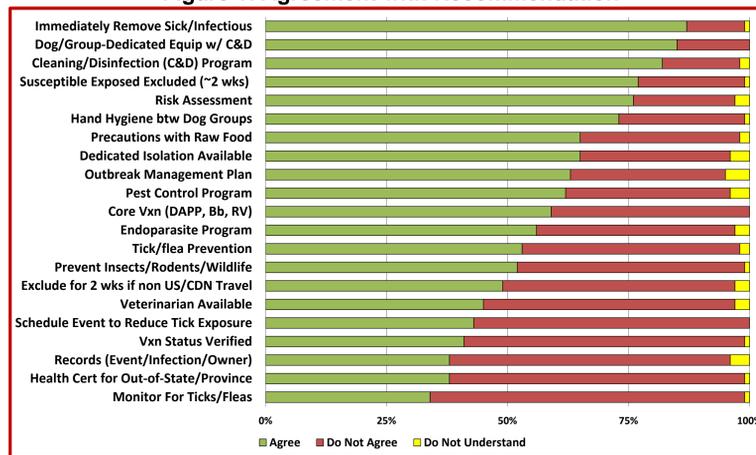
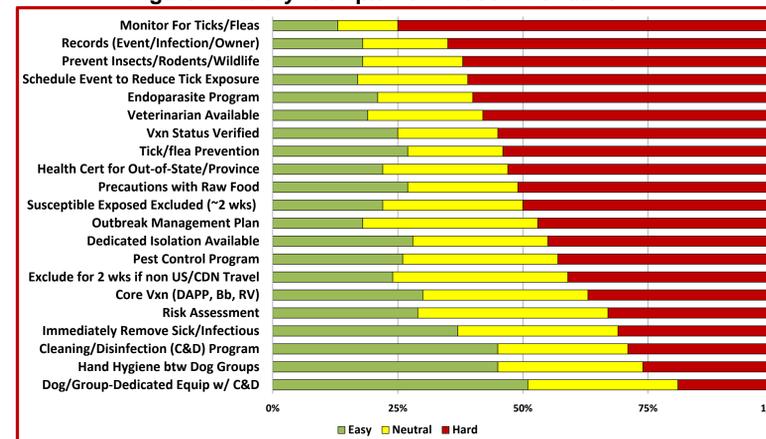


Figure 2: Ability to Implement Recommendation



Themes Related to Difficulty to Implementation:

Ability to enforce/verify guidelines was the most common reason provided for a recommendation to be difficult to implement. This accounted for 23-64% of comments per recommendation. Additional common themes included concerns over:

- Administrative (cost, human resources)
- Ethical reasons
- Privacy concerns

Additional Comments:

Many participants indicated a strong need for official 'on-high' outreach to promote awareness and education related to canine infectious diseases.

Most (82%) indicated the recommendations captured their areas of concern for infectious disease transmission. Participants with additional concerns frequently (52%) listed "unnecessary regulations being imposed."

SUMMARY

Overall, respondents agreed with recommendations and felt they could be implemented.

Several areas may be notably difficult to implement having both low agreement and high perceived difficulty.

Survey responses identified strong needs for:

- Further refinement of some recommendations to aid comprehension and clarity (especially around ecto- and endoparasite control) at the event and participant levels.
- Education to raise awareness and help promote culture change related to disease risk prevention, at all levels.
- Self (internal)-imposed regulations as opposed to external requirements.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to raise awareness and meet outreach needs for canine infectious disease in group settings amongst event participants and organizers, the following are in development**:

- Online freely available canine infectious disease risk calculator tool
- 'White paper' summarizing the guidelines
- FAQ/FACT documents (pathogen & general concept)
- Open-access peer-reviewed article



**Documents will be posted at <http://www.akcchf.org/> and <http://www.wormsandgermsblog.com/>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank the AKC Canine Health Foundation and the National Parent Club Canine Health Conference attendees who participated in this study. Funding was provided by the AKC Canine Health Foundation.

FURTHER INFORMATION: Contact: stull.82@osu.edu

Disclosure: Consulting engagement, minor shareholder with Rayne Clinical Nutrition Canada (Evason) Grant/Research Support: AKC Canine Health Foundation (Stull, Evason, Kasten)